

VZCZCXRO3875
OO RUEHBI
DE RUEHLM #0600/01 1720728
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 200728Z JUN 08
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8310
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0962
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7951
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 6123
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4450
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2120
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4423
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3523
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8557
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6002
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0693
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2827
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 000600

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PHUM MOPS CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: SEVERAL TRACK 2 AND 1.5 INITIATIVES
UNDERWAY OR UNDER CONSIDERATION

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Prominent Sri Lankans and interested members of the international community are pursuing a number of Track 1.5 and 2 initiatives to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict. The One Text Initiative (OTI) appears to have progressed the most. Other initiatives are either embryonic or stalled. OTI brings together senior political leaders to tackle difficult issues, such as access to humanitarian goods and services, and language policy. In the long term, OTI aims to build confidence and trust among stakeholders necessary for future peace talks. Post's interlocutors on these initiatives consistently emphasize that their efforts should remain out of the media spotlight to keep Sinhalese nationalists from pressuring the government to disengage. Post will continue quietly to support these efforts and encourage political leaders to remain involved. End Summary.

One Text Initiative

¶12. (SBU) The aim of the One Text Initiative (OTI) is two-fold. In the short term, OTI brings together senior leaders of Sri Lanka's major political parties to tackle difficult issues that are directly related to the conflict (such as access to humanitarian goods and services, and language policy). In the long term, through these exercises, OTI aims to build confidence and trust among stakeholders. Thus, when peace talks resume, OTI might serve as a parallel process in which leaders can engage on difficult issues and feed into negotiations.

¶13. (SBU) OTI began in 2004, but after a period of neglect, was redesigned and restarted in October 2007. Director Mangala Moonesinghe and Lead Facilitator Nick Lewer work to keep all parties on board and facilitate discussions. The main body, the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (or "Long Table"), is composed of senior political party leaders, plus four civil society representatives who attend in an observer capacity. The Long Table includes several cabinet ministers: Minister of Science and Technology and Chair of the All Party Representative Committee Tissa Vitharana, Minister of Constitutional Affairs D.E.W. Gunasekera, acting Minister of Justice Dilan Perera, and Minister of Transport Dallas Allahuperuma. Other members include: leader of the Tamil

National Alliance (TNA) R. Sampanthan, United National Party (UNP) member and former Minister of Finance K.N. Choksy, representatives from the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress and the National Unity Alliance (the two largest Muslim political parties), and representatives from the government's Secretariat for Coordinating the Peace Process (SCOPP) and the Peace Secretariat for Muslims (PSM). Members meet monthly and are supported by party-nominated researchers.

¶4. (SBU) J.S. Tissainayagam, a columnist for the Sunday Times, joined OTI as the TNA researcher and has since been appointed to the Board of Directors. He is currently being detained by the Terrorist Investigation Division of the Sri Lankan police. On June 6, the Defense Ministry issued a new detention order against Tissainayagam for an additional 90 days. The GSL maintains that he is under investigation for unspecified terrorist links, but no charges have been filed. OTI director Moonesinghe, this Embassy, and other foreign missions have intervened repeatedly to try to get Tissainayagam released - so far without success.

¶5. (SBU) The Long Table has chosen four themes within which to approach specific issues: 1) access to humanitarian goods and services, 2) official language policy, 3) human security and human rights, and 4) lessons to be learned from failed peace processes. A sub-group, or "Small Table" (composed of the TNA, SCOPP, PSM, and Lewer), focuses on humanitarian goods and services; one on language policy will soon be convened. Small Tables may invite outside experts to assist and produce by consensus a discussion document, which is sent

COLOMBO 00000600 002 OF 003

to the Long Table for comment. Ultimately, the Long Table comes to a consensus agreement on the document -- hence, "One Text." The process is intended to be fluid and flexible, with many different sizes and types of groups convening. Lewer reports that the GSL is sending senior ministers to Small Table discussions. Eventually, OTI wants to have three facilitators in addition to Lewer: a Tamil, Sinhalese, and Muslim.

¶6. (SBU) The Norwegian, Swiss, British and Canadian Foreign Ministries fund OTI. The U.S. is also providing \$25,000 to OTI to cover lease costs for its office. In a meeting on April 23, Lewer told Ambassador that it would be helpful for the U.S. to encourage support for OTI at high levels in the GSL, but that the U.S. should do so quietly so that OTI remains under the radar.

International Study Group

¶7. (SBU) In 2007, Dr. Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, head of the Center for Policy Alternatives in Colombo, and Norbert Roper, then-country director of the Berghof Foundation, quietly put forward a proposal for an "International Study Group." Saravanamuttu is one of the most respected NGO leaders in Sri Lanka. Roper, a German national, is a highly experienced INGO executive who had to depart Sri Lanka in January 2008 when the GSL revoked his work visa.

¶8. (SBU) Saravanamuttu and Roper visited Washington in February 2008 to speak with former Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage about serving as head of an International Study Group of eminent persons. Its objectives would be: 1) to generate ideas on how international actors can support new indigenous peace initiatives more creatively and effectively than they did during the 2002 - 2005 Ceasefire Agreement and 2) to engage with the stakeholders in Sri Lanka in a discreet and effective way to explore which options for new peace initiatives are most realistic and promising.

¶9. (SBU) Saravanamuttu told PolOff on June 6 that he and Roper intend to hold meetings in Tokyo and New Delhi in July, at which they hope to decide who the Japanese and Indian eminent persons will be. Norway supports the initiative, and

Saravanmuttu is hoping for funding from the U.S. Institute of Peace, as well as Japanese foundations. Roper may also arrange a meeting with EU representatives about the initiative.

A Norwegian Effort

¶10. (SBU) Norwegian Ambassador Tore Hattrem briefed PolChief on quiet efforts by former Norwegian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (2001-2005) and Secretary-General of International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) Vidar Helgesen to implement a Track 1.5 initiative. Helgesen aims to bring together constitutional experts from India and the LTTE Diaspora, and gradually involve experts from southern Sri Lanka and eventually the GSL. Helgesen's approach to the Indians met with a cool reception, however. Minister of Tourism Milinda Moragoda supports the idea and has said he plans to encourage India to engage. Another obstacle to progress at this time is the difficulty of access to Kilinochchi. For the last several months, the GSL has not been permitting foreign diplomats to go there.

A South African Effort

¶11. (SBU) A group of South Africans, Roelf Meyer, Ebrahim Ebrahim, and Ivor Jenkins, have been visiting Sri Lanka

COLOMBO 00000600 003 OF 003

occasionally since 2002. In the period after conclusion of the 2002 Ceasefire Agreement, they had regular contact with the LTTE through Anton Balasingham and Tamilchelvan. After the CFA collapsed, the group's focus has been engaging political parties in the south. Working with the organization Impact, they plan to select a group of Sri Lankans from the south to visit South Africa, with the goal of building a better relationship between the President's UPFA and the principal opposition UNP.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: Post's interlocutors on the above initiatives consistently emphasize that their efforts could get derailed if they become politicized through media coverage. If widely publicized, the Sinhalese supremacist parties like the JVP and JHU would seek to derail these Track 1.5 and 2 initiatives, putting pressure on President Rajapaksa and other government officials and political leaders to back away from involvement. Ambassador and Emboffs will continue to quietly support these efforts and encourage political leaders to engage in them as much as possible. Post sees attempts to engage Sinhalese nationalists in the south as well as the Tamil diaspora community as particularly important in laying the groundwork for future productive negotiations.

MOORE